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Schreiner, P., Kraft, F. & Wright, A. (eds) (2007). *Good practice in religious education. Examples and perspectives of primary schools*. Berlin: LIT Verlag. ISBN 978-3-8258-9076-6

Individualism, pluralism and globalisation bring changes that affect religious education. Along with other developments, they challenge religious education to reposition itself. In practice this is manifested in approaches to children's experience, religious traditions and differences between children. In Europe it happens in diverse ways. The volume reviewed here attests this diversity of approaches.

Religious education in Europe, we have noted, varies greatly. This relates not only to historical, political and educational developments that differ from one country to the next, but also to the setting of religious education in schools. Religiously affiliated schools usually adopt a denominational approach focusing on students' identity formation, particularly its religious dimension. By contrast schools presenting religious education under the authority of the state treat the subject largely with a view to knowledge about and understanding of religion. Such differences make it difficult to compare the practice of religious education in various contexts. The editors of the volume saw fit to present the various practices in ten articles, based on the concept of good practice with reference to examples of settings where "the orientation of teaching and learning towards the situation and the life-world of the child was given prominence" (p.10). That is a content-related criterion. They also decided that the structure of the articles should, as far as possible, be uniform. Each article starts with an overview of the educational system, primary education and religious education in the relevant country. This is followed by a case study of a particular classroom-based teaching/learning situation as an instance of good practice, concluding with some reflections on the case studies. Examples of good practice are from Austria, Bulgaria, England and Wales, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Northern Ireland and Norway.

Outstanding articles are those of Bastide on pupil-to-pupil dialogue in England and Wales; Nevalainen and Luodeslampi on *Godly play* in Finland; and Freudenberger-Lötz and Kraft on theologising with children in Germany. Pupil-to-pupil dialogue refers to religious education that invites students to join in a dialogue on such religious topics as sacred books and places of worship. The dialogue is not so much an exchange of different points of view as a collaborative search for meaning. Godly play is a special method of telling Bible-stories in three phases: telling the story, exploring by wondering about aspects of the story, and finally creating an object of art related to the story. The method allows students to engage with the story on their own terms. Theologising with children means to pick up students' questions and concerns about religious topics and discuss these with them. The three methods are all designed to support and guide students' ability to marvel and question. As such the three articles describe instances of good practice.

The volume represents an attempt to form a picture of different practices in religious education in Europe. The editors certainly managed to do that. However, whether the methods outlined exemplify good practice cannot be assessed purely on the basis of their structure and goals; it also calls for empirical research. Some articles (e.g. Bastide's on pupil-to-pupil dialogue) move in that direction. Such research will have to determine whether

religious education in fact manages to enrich children's understanding of religion, enhances religious competence, stimulates active participation in story telling and ritual, and awakens children's religious self-understanding. To undertake research of this nature, which will also be comparative internationally, demands clear theoretical premises at both a theological and a pedagogic level. — THEO VAN DER ZEE, Nijmegen, NL